

Message Text

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SUBJECT: POST'S REVISED BILATERAL COMMUNICATION ESSAY

REF: USIA 08658

1. TENSIONS IN COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN BULGARIA AND THE UNITED STATES ARE A PRODUCT OF HISTORY, DISTANCE, IGNORANCE, AND DIAMETRICALLY-OPPOSED IDEOLOGIES. WHILE SOME INDIVIDUAL AMERICANS CHAMPIONED BULGARIAN ASPIRATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE 19TH CENTURY, AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE COUNTRY'S CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PROGRESS, OFFICIAL US-BULGARIAN CONTACTS ARE OF RELATIVELY RECENT VINTAGE. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1914, SEVERED IN 1941, RE-ESTABLISHED IN 1947, SUSPENDED IN 1950, AND RESUMED IN 1960. UNTIL RECENTLY, POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND TRADE ACTIVITIES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE MINIMAL AND BILATERAL COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS SEVERELY LIMITED.

2. SINCE 1944 BULGARIA HAS BEEN CLOSELY LINKED TO THE USSR IDEOLOGICALLY, POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY (CEMA), AND MILITARILY (WARSAW PACT). ITS GOVERNMENT'S STATED GOAL IS "TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND THE UNBREAKABLE ALLIANCE, FRIENDSHIP, AND ALL-ROUND COOPERATION WITH THE USSR AND THE OTHER FRATERNAL SOCIALIST COUNTRIES." THUS, THE GOB CONSISTENTLY DEFENDS AND SUPPORTS SOVIET-INSPIRED
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POLICIES, PROFESSEDLY MOTIVATED BY CONCERNS FOR PEACE AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS, AND CRITICIZES POLICIES OF WESTERN COUNTRIES, TH US IN PARTICULAR. THE COUNTRY IS COMMUNIST-RULED, ITS AGRICULTURE PREDOMINANTLY COLLECTIVIZED, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY FULLY NATIONALIZED, AND ITS PEOPLE RIGIDLY CONTROLLED AND GENERALLY ISOLATED FROM THE WEST AND WESTERN THOUGHT. CONTROL OF SOURCES

OF INFORMATION IS STRICT, AVAILABILITY OF WESTERN INFORMATION SEVERELY RESTRICTED, AND EMBASSY ACCESS TO BULGARIAN OFFICIALS LIMITED. THE US IS CONSIDERED THE MAJOR IDEOLOGICAL ENEMY OF "SOCIALISM," AND BULGARIAN PROPAGANDA HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY ANTI-AMERICAN.

3. DESPITE SERIOUS FACTORS INHIBITING BILATERAL COMMUNICATION, INCLUDING THE IDEOLOGICAL ANTAGONISM BETWEEN CAPITALISM AND COMMUNISM, BOTH THE US AND BULGARIA ARE IDENTIFYING SOME AREAS OF COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION IN THEIR MUTUAL INTERESTS AND CONSISTENT WITH THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. THIS WAS THE BASIC RATIONALE FOR THE SIGNING OF THE FIRST AGREEMENT ON EXCHANGES AND COOPERATION IN CULTURAL, SCIENTIFIC, EDUCATIONAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND OTHER FIELDS IN 1977. THIS AGREEMENT, WITH OTHERS STEMMING FROM IT, CAN SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR ICA TO ESTABLISH AND DEVELOP LONG-TERM CONTACTS WITH BULGARIA.

4. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BULGARIA AND THE US ARE NUMEROUS AND REAL. AT THE SAME TIME, DECADES OF PRO-SOVIET AND COMMUNIST INDOCTRINATION, ANTI-AMERICAN DISTORTIONS, DENIAL OF ACCESS TO WESTERN NEWS SOURCES, AND LIMITED PERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO WIDESPREAD MISPERCEPTIONS. THESE MISPERCEPTIONS EXIST IN THEIR VIEW OF THEMSELVES AND OF US, AND IN OURS OF THEM. BULGARIA IS RULED BY AN ORTHODOX UNCLASSIFIED

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COMMUNIST HIERARCHY WHICH INVOKES MARXISM-LENINISM AND PAYS OBEISANCE TO THE SOVIET UNION, YET FREQUENTLY REVEALS NATIONALISTIC FEELINGS IN RECALLING BULGARIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE. THE POPULATION IS CONTINUALLY TOLD BY THE STATE-CONTROLLED MEDIA, AND REMINDED BY THE LEADERS, THAT IT IS GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION, ASSURED OF EMPLOYMENT, AND PROTECTED FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE BY THE LARGEST AND WISDOM OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERSHIP. THE BULGARIANS ARE TOLD THEIRS IS A TRUE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, AS REFLECTED IN THE 1971 CONSTITUTION, AND THAT THE RECENTLY ADOPTED "BREZHNEV" CONSTITUTION OF THE USSR INDICATES STILL A HIGHER-LEVEL ACHIEVEMENT THAT IS WORTHY OF EMULATION. "FIVE HUNDRED YEARS UNDER THE OTTOMAN YOKE" AND "RAVAGES UNDER FASCISM" ARE FREQUENTLY CITED AS REMINDERS OF PAST SUFFERING. THE 1878 RUSSIAN AND 1944 SOVIET "LIBERATIONS" OF BULGARIA ARE CITED AS RATIONALE FOR MAINTAINING CLOSE MILITARY LINKS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AS A GUARANTEE AGAINST ANY FOREIGN INTERUSION INTO BULGARIA. FURTHERMORE, THE BULGARIANS ARE TOLD, THEY HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO AID THE SOCIALIST CAMP (AS IN THE 1968 INTERVENTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA).

5. ANY PUBLIC CHALLENGE OR OPPOSITION TO THE PARTY'S DOCTRINES AND POLICIES IS DEALT WITH QUICKLY AND HARSHLY. THE LEADERSHIP HOLDS THERE IS NO DISSIDENCE AND OPPOSITION IN BULGARIA, BUT THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF ALIENATION AND NASCENT DISSIDENCE. THE GENERAL POPULATION IS AT LEAST SUSPICIOUS OF GOB CLAIMS BUT LIVES WITH THEM, AS IT MUST. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE BULGARIANS ARE GENUINELY PROUD OF THEIR COUNTRY'S HISTORY, EDUCATION, CULTURE ANFECONOMIC PROGRESS, AND THE REGIME SEEKS TO CAPITALIZE ON THIS PRIDE FOR ITS OWN BENEFIT.

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6. THE OFFICIAL BULGARIAN IMAGE OF THE U.S. IS A STEREOTYPE SIMILAR TO THE ONE PROJECTED BY THE SOVIETS-- AMERICAN SOCIETY CONTROLLED BY DECADENT CAPITALISTS, WHO ENRICH THEMSELVES BY EXPLOITING THE MASSES, WITH IMPERIALISTIC AIMS IN THE WORLD. THE U.S. CLAIM THAT ITS CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT ARE DEMOCRATIC IS HELD TO BE FALSE, AND THE "AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE," WITH ALLEGED AFFLUENCE, FREEDOMS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS, A "SHAM." THE U.S. IS DEPICTED AS A RACIST COUNTRY, PLAGUED BY POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION, WITH A GOVERNMENT SERVING THE RULING CAPITALISS, INDIFFERENT TO THE PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE, AND PURSUING AGGRESSIVE, IMPERIALIST, AND COLONIALIST POLICIES. HOW MUCH IMPACT HAS BEEN MADE BY INCESSANT ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA IN PROJUCTING THIS

FALSE IMAGE OF THE U.S. CANNOT BE GAUGED. CERTAINLY THE MAJORITY DO NOT REALLY BELIEVE IT ALL, BUT MANY BULGARIANS, INCLUDING THE ELITE AND THE EDUCATED, SHOW AN ABYSMAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICIES AND IGNORANCE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY.

7. WHILE THE REGIME CONSIDERS THE AMERICAN SYSTEM WITH ANTIPATHY AS EXPLOITATIVE AND IMPERIALISTIC, NEVERTHELESS IT HAS ADMIRATION FOR AMERICAN POWER AND ACHIEVEMENTS, UNCLASSIFIED

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ESPECIALLY IN ECONOMY, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION AND CULTURE. THERE ARE VARYING DEGREES OF AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING, IGNORANCE, SUSPICIONS, AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE U.S. DENIAL OF WESTERN NEWS SOURCES AND SEVERE LIMITATIONS ON CONTACT AND TRAVEL HAVE CREATED DISSATISFACTION AMONG THE POPULATION AND A HUNGER FOR PERSONAL CONTACT WITH AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S., EVEN AMONG MEMBERS OF THE RULING STRATA. THERE IS GENERAL YEARNING FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE WESERN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE U.S., ESPECIALLY IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES. HOWEVER, A DICHOTOMY EXISTS WITHIN THE BUREAUCRACY. THE REGIME'S PUBLICLY DECLARED POLICY IS TO BROADEN EXCHANGES FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT, BUT IT HAS WARNED THAT THE "CONTENT" IN THE CULTURAL EXCHANGES IS OF PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE IT IS IN THIS AREA THAT IDEOLOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS ARE CONCENTRATED. THUS, WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE REGIME'S ATTEMPTS TO REJECT THOSE PROGRAMS THAT HAVE POTENTIAL FOR "CONTAMINATING" THE BULGARIAN PEOPLE -- E.G., THE MASS MEDIA, CONTEMPORARY, ESPECIALLY "AVANT GARDE" AMERICAN PERFORMING ARTISTS, AND IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.

8. IN PURSUING ITS PROGRAMMING EFFORTS WITHIN THE MISSION'S RESPONSIBILITIES, THE P&C SECTION IS COGNIZANT THAT BULGARIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES AND AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF BULGARIA ARE A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. IN REDUCING MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT U.S. OPOLICIES AND SOCIETY, BY ENGAGING IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH BULGARIA, ICA HAS IMPORTANT ASSETS IN BULGARIA.

9. THE EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL ASSETS, PRODUCT OF RECENTLY IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH BULGARIA, HAVE POTENTIAL FOR LONG-UNCLASSIFIED

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TERM WATIONSHIPS. IN JUNE, 1977, THE FIRST EXCHANGES AGREEMENT AND PROGRAM OF EXCHANGES WERE SIGNED. AS AN OFFSHOOT, IN FEBRUARY, 1978, THE FIRST AGREEMENT ON SCIENIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN BULGARIA AND THE U.S. WAS SIGNED, AS WAS A RENEWED AGREEMENT

BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND EXCHANGES BOARD (IREX) AND BULGARIA'S STATE COMMITTEE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL PROGRESS (SCSP) FOR THE YEARS 1977-80. THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (NAS) AND THE BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (BAN) CONTINUE THEIR EXCHANGES PROGRAM UNDER A PREVIOUS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WHILE NEGOTIATING A NEW ONE. THE SCSTP MAINTAINS CONTACT WITH THE YMCA. ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONAL LINKS WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1973 WITH THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BULGARIAN STUDIES (HELD IN THE U.S.), AND A SECOND CONFERENCE IS TO BE HELD IN BULGARIA IN 1978. ETHNIC AFFILIATION IS MARGINAL; THERE ARE SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND AMERICANS OF BULGARIAN EXTRACTION. IN ACCORDANCE WITH A 1963 AGREEMENT, THE U.S. MAKES PAYMENT OF GOVERNMENT BENEFITS TO ABOUT 100 AMERICAN CITIZENS CURRENTLY LIVING IN BULGARIA. A CONSULAR AGREEMENT WENT INTO EFFECT IN 1975, MUTUAL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS WERE REDUCED IN 1977, A FISHING AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED IN 1976, AND DISCUSSIONS ARE UNDERWAY REGARDING POSSIBLE AGRICULTURAL AND MARITIME ARRANGEMENTS. US-BULGARIAN TRADE HAS GENERALLY BEEN ON THE UPSWING IN RECENT YEARS AND AMERICAN COMPANIES HAVE PARTICIPATED REGULARLY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AT THE ANNUAL PLOVDIV INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR. THE BULGARIAN-US ECONOMIC COUNCIL, CREATED IN 1974, PROVIDES A FORUM FOR AMERICAN

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AND BULGARIAN LEADERS AND BUSINESSMEN TO MEET AND DISCUSS QUESTIONS OF MUTUAL INTEREST AND TO EXCHANGE ECONOMIC INFORMATION. THUS, WITHIN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME, U.S. AND BULGARIA HAVE IDENTIFIED A NUMBER OF

AREAS IN WHICH INSTITUTIONS AND PEOPLE OF BOTH COUNTRIES INTERACT FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT.

10. THESE AGREEMENTS AND LINKS PROVIDE ICA AND THE U.S. SUBSTANTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIRECT, FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS, ONE-ON-ONE COMMUNICATION, AND CANDID DIALOGUE. POSSIBILITIES INCLUDE CONFERENCES, SYMPOSIA, AND SEMINARS (TECHNICAL SALES, LABOR, WITH EXHIBITIONS, AND AS PART OF THE FOREGOING AGREEMENTS). BULGARIAN OFFICIALS ARE REASONABLY RECEPTIVE TO THIS APPROACH. ESPECIALLY PROMISING AREAS FOR LONG-TERM EFFECTIVE BILATERAL COMMUNICATION, WITH BEST PROSPECTS FOR EXPANSION AND FOR DEVELOPING MORE ACCURATE PERCEPTIONS OF EACH OTHER, ARE IN CULTURE, EDUCATION, AND EXCHANGES OF PERSONS. THESE ARE PART OF THE PROGRAM OF EXCHANGES AND CAN BE STEADILY INCREASED. WE SHOULD STRIVE TO INCLUDE MORE SENIOR ACADEMIC, AND YOUNG POLITICAL, IVS DESPITE GOB PROPENSITY FOR "SCIENTIFIC" PERSONNEL.

11. OTHER POSSIBILITIES EXIST IN THE ACADEMIC, CULTURAL, UNCLASSIFIED

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AND OTHER FIELDS. WE MUST TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THEM, WHILE CONTINUALLY EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MASS MEDIA. THE VOICE OF AMERICA BROADCASTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE BULGARIAN LANGUAGE, CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF NEWS AND REFLECTION OF AMERICAN THOUGHT AND INSTITUTIONS. THEY ARE NOT JAMMED.

12. MISSION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES THAT CAN BE MOST EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED BY POST PROGRAMS ARE: (1) EXPLAIN U.S. POLICY AND PROJECT AN IMAGE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY; (2) IMPLEMENT FULLY THE EXCHANGES AGREEMENT, PROGRAM OF EXCHANGES, AND OTHER BILATERAL AGREEMENTS; (3) BROADEN AWARENESS OF U.S. CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS. TO A LESSER EXTENT, P&C SUPPORTS TECHNICAL SALES SEMINARS. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH AUTHORITIES, THE POST UGS THE BULGARIAN AUTHORITIES TO REDUCE THE ANTI-AMERICAN CONTENT OF THEIR MEDIA AND TO PORTRAY THE U.S. IN MORE BALANCED TERMS. THESE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ARE TREATED BY P&C THROUGH PERSONA-TO-PERSON CONTACT, DISSEMI-589, 9* 048,5 .ATERIALS, EXHIBITS, AND PERSONNEL EXCHANGES. LEAST SATISFACTORY PROSPECTS ARE IN THE MASS MEDIA, BOTH IN THE EMBASSY'S PLACEMENT EFFORTS AND IN COUNTERING GOB ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA. ALSO, IN SUPPORT OF SOVIET POLICY, THE LEADERS AND THE RIGIDLY-CONTROLLED MEDIA HAVE ESPECIALLY ATTACKED THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AS INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF SOVEREIGN COUNTRIES.

13. WHILE THE POST MUST COPE WITH PARTY-CONTROLLED STATE APPARATUS WHICH SETS POLICY, ORCHESTRATES PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS, AND REQUIRES US TO CHANNEL ALL PROGRAMMING THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, US-BULGARIAN COMMUNICATION WILL CONTINUE, AND POSSIBLY EX-UNCLASSIFIED

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PAND, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREAS CITED ABOVE.

14. DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IS PROMPTED BY BULGARIAN SELF-INTEREST. GOB VIEWS EXCHANGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE -- TO SPREAD IDEAS AND "SOCIALIST CULTURE" -- AND IN VIEW OF THE PRACTICAL BENEFITS DERIVED FROM WESTERN TRADE, TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE. THE REGIME WTACKS WESTERN POLICIES ON IDEOLOGICAL GROUNDS, WITH ICA A SPECIAL TARGET -- AS A PURVEYOR OF PSYWAR WHICH ATTEMPTS THROUGH BROADCASTS AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE TO IMPOSE THE BOURGEOIS WAY OF LIFE, IDEAS, MORALS AND BEHAVIOR. HOWEVER, ICA AND THE POST HAVE ASSETS, AS NOTED, AND THE POPULATION IS RECEPTIVE TO COMMUNICATION WITH THE U.S. BILATERAL, PRIMARILY GOVERNMENT, INSTITUTIONAL LINKS HAVE BEEN ONLY RECENTLY ESTABLISHED BUT HAVE POTENTIAL FOR LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT. IN ADDITION, THE ICA SHOULD NURTURE AND SUPPORT ACADEMIC AND OTHER PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO DEVELOP LASTING LINKS WITH BULGARIAN ESTABLISHMENTS FOR MEANINGFUL TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUE.
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